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BAD INFLUENCES ON YOUTH

by

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BAD INFLUENCES ON YOUTH

EFFORTS to comprehend an apparently widespread breakdown in disciplinary controls over young people point to a number of influences in the national life which seem to be damaging the moral fiber of American youth and which may be responsible for the particularly vicious nature of some juvenile offenses. In its search of more than a year and a half for an explanation of this disturbing situation, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee to Study Juvenile Delinquency has drawn extensively on the experience of policemen, judges, social workers, parents, teachers, clergymen, and others who deal directly with children and adolescents. Their testimony pieces together an unsavory picture which shows commercial interests deliberately fostering a taste for vice and violence among young people, some not yet in their teens.

The evidence by no means indicates widespread corruption of children, but dissemination of depraved literature among minors, and the availability to them of morale-sapping stimulants, suggest that every child may be a potential victim. Although some youngsters may be able to withstand such influences, others may be deeply hurt in ways not immediately apparent. The few whose outlook on life is already seriously disturbed may be pushed into serious, even revolting crime.

The impact of demoralizing influences is heightened today, because children live in a troubled society in which the traditional disciplines of home, school, and church appear to have weakened. With the lifting of old taboos, murder, brutality, violence, lewdness and various kinds of psychopathic criminality have become subjects of free and open discussion in the press and among individuals. Comic books, television shows, and movies, moreover, give youngsters a heavy diet of sex, sin, and crime in a vivid form such as was not available to any previous generation of children.

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Prevalence of neurotic disturbances among adults, frequent moving of many families which deprives their children of normal neighborhood associations,¹ the crowded schools, lack of home chores, the overall menace of atomic destruction, and hostile feelings engendered by the cold war all add up to a social climate conducive to rebellious and amoral attitudes in the young.

Many of these factors in modern society cannot be readily modified, and children must be taught to deal with them constructively. But other unfavorable influences, spread commercially in callous disregard of the human damage and misery that may be caused, are subject to legislative and police action. Proposals for strengthening controls in those cases are gaining momentum, despite apprehensions about invoking censorship and possibly imposing undue limitations on civil liberties.

DISTRIBUTION OF PORNOGRAPHY TO SCHOOL CHILDREN

Sen. Kefauver (D-Tenn.), chairman of the juvenile delinquency subcommittee, announced at a hearing in New York City on May 24 that he was determined to deal as fully as possible with the still hushed-up subject of pornography.

It is time that this whole sordid business in insidious filth be brought out into the open. . . . Much of the pornographic material is actually designed for the impressionable juvenile mind. It is obvious that these materials could do incalculable damage to the moral and psychological fabric of our society through their effect on youngsters.

The subcommittee estimated that the total business in pornography in the United States amounted to \$350 million a year. Profits are high. A single consignment, confiscated in Baltimore last year, contained 88,000 pieces of pornography and had an estimated retail value of \$250,000. A Chicago police official estimated the profits of one interstate distributor at \$12,000 a month. A witness in Los Angeles on June 18 said a \$600 investment in 1948 had been built up to a million-dollar-a-year trade in photographs of nude girls.

The pornography business was found to be well-organized. The distribution networks spread over many states.

¹ "When a child thinks of himself as a transient, he is much less inclined to be governed by what society thinks of his behavior and he has a harder time finding constructive outlets for his behavior."—Benjamin Fine, *One Million Delinquents* (1955), p. 101.

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Identical books and pictures have been seized in Missouri and in Connecticut, in Louisiana and in New York.

"Children are one of the prime targets of those who distribute these filthy materials," the subcommittee reported early this year. "Huge quantities are of a type designed for the young." A subcommittee investigator testified in May that replies to questionnaires sent to police chiefs in many large cities indicated "a definite increase in pornography going to children."

Minors obtain the material by direct purchase from street peddlers, at candy stores or other small business establishments in their neighborhoods, or through the mails. Many sellers of pornography seek out child customers, who spend their lunch or allowance money on indecent pictures. Mailing lists containing names of children who have answered advertisements in comic books are used to promote the sale of salacious pictures and books. Children as young as nine years of age were reported to have received such circulars in the mail.

Children have purchased single lewd postcards for 25¢ and paid \$5 to \$8 for a deck of cards. A type of pornography known as "Maggie and Jiggs" plagiarizes the characters of wholesome children's comics and places them in indecent situations. Most objectionable of all, many lewd pictures illustrate homosexual and other deviationist practices.

Juveniles rarely obtain indecent movie films, but exhibition of such films to children by adults, either for a fee or as a means of seduction, has been reported. Films are sometimes shown in backrooms of shops or other neighborhood hideaways unknown to parents. The Senate subcommittee was told also of cases in which indecent films had been shown to teen-age baby-sitters.² In some cases school girls in their early teens had been induced, on promise of movie careers, to pose for lewd pictures or films.

USE OF NARCOTICS AND ALCOHOL AMONG ADOLESCENTS

It is difficult to determine the extent of drug addiction among minors. Data on arrests and commitments to pub-

² Washington, D. C., police in 1953 intercepted the showing of a lewd film—described by the local chief of the vice squad as "the filthiest that I have ever seen"—to a group of 197 minors, aged 11 up. The boys had paid \$5 apiece for what had been described to parents as a three-fraternity party.

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lic hospitals tell only part of the story, because many young addicts are arrested for other offenses and some are treated privately.³ The Federal Narcotics Commission estimated last month that there were 60,000 addicts in the United States, of whom 13 per cent were under the age of 21. Federal Narcotics Commissioner Harry J. Anslinger testified before a congressional committee on June 2 that drug addiction among juveniles had reached a peak in 1951 and had been declining since that year. Annual surveys by the Board of Education in New York City have shown a drop from 155 known addicts and 35 suspects in the public schools there in 1951 to only nine known addicts and three suspects in May 1955.⁴

The Senate subcommittee found drug addiction among minors chiefly in large municipalities, port cities, and communities close to the Mexican border. A subcommittee report named Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington among cities in which the incidence was relatively high. A San Diego newspaperman testified that he saw youngsters from the age of 11 up crossing the border to Tia Juana and returning "very obviously hipped up or bleary-eyed from smoking marihuana" obtained at a "brothel night club."⁵

Marihuana smoking is considered particularly insidious, because many youngsters do not believe it is habit-forming and because it frequently leads to indulgence in even more deleterious drugs. The Senate subcommittee was unable to find out how much marihuana reaches minors, but it received estimates that only two to five per cent of the traffic is intercepted by authorities. At the same time, enough was seized in 1954 in the El Paso district alone to make more than a million cigarettes.

Evidence introduced at the hearings indicated a rising use of barbiturate drugs at juvenile parties. Known as "goof balls," "red birds," "blue birds," or "yellow jackets," the drug pellets are obtained from unscrupulous druggists and

³ Low-income and minority groups account for the largest number of arrests, but the Kefauver subcommittee found also "many instances of juveniles in high and middle-income groups using marihuana, heroin and other dangerous drugs."

⁴ Frank J. O'Brien, Associate Superintendent of Schools in New York City, said on May 25: "This report does not necessarily mean that there aren't additional children in our schools who are using drugs, but, in the early stages of drug use and until physical signs of drug use become evident, such pupils may not be discoverable."

⁵ Senate Judiciary Subcommittee to Study Juvenile Delinquency, Interim Report (1955), p. 38.

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consumed with alcoholic beverages or soft drinks. Thus taken, the drugs are said to cause the user "to lose all inhibition and control." One youth described the effect as stronger than marihuana, because "After you take them . . . you feel like you can lick anybody and want to."

Minors find it easy in some communities to obtain liquor for parties by simply calling up stores which deliver orders. Many "beer joints" were found to cater to the teen-age trade.

PREDILECTION OF YOUTH FOR CRIME AND HORROR COMICS

Children who have no contact with activities that are beyond the law nevertheless are exposed to a tremendous amount of crime and sex through legitimate media of entertainment. An estimated 30 million copies of crime and horror books, constituting one-fifth of the total comic-book output, were being printed each month in the spring of 1954. According to one authority, estimated sales of all comics have increased more than 1,000 per cent since 1946; at least 90 per cent of all children aged 6-11 and more than 80 per cent of the 11-17 age group read them regularly.⁶ Typical issues are published in editions of 750,000, and they are available on most of the country's 100,000 newsstands.

Crime and horror books have been described as offering "short courses in murder, mayhem, robbery, rape, cannibalism, carnage, necrophilia, sex, sadism, masochism, and virtually every other form of crime, degeneracy, bestiality and horror."⁷ Several sample plots were summarized by the Senate subcommittee:

A golden-haired girl of about eight or ten murders her drunkard father, then plants evidence to implicate her mother and her mother's lover, who are electrocuted for the crime. The last picture shows her winking at the reader and saying, ". . . which is just the way I'd hoped it would work out when I shot daddy from the front bedroom window . . . and went downstairs and put the gun in mommy's hand and started the crying act."

A sadistic school teacher marries the widowed father of a pupil for his money, then hatchets him to death because he is miserly. In revenge, her stepson lures her into quicksand where she dies while the boy goes off humming.

The cartoons emphasize bleeding, dismemberment, and

⁶ William C. Kvaraceus, *The Community and the Delinquent* (1954), pp. 350-351.

⁷ Senate Judiciary Committee, Interim Report, *Comic Books and Juvenile Delinquency* (Mar. 14, 1953), p. 7.

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physical agony. One strip cited by the subcommittee showed close-ups of portions of a human body which the murderer had stuffed into whisky bottles. Another showed the body of a man, murdered by his doctor, with the heart cut out. Language is sometimes more vivid than pictures. The caption on a drawing of a murderer lowering an ax on his wife read: "Bertha squealed as Norman brought the ax down. The swinging of steel and the thud of the razor-sharp metal against flesh cut the squeal short." One picture frame, climaxing a murder sequence, was colored solid red with the caption: "His shrieks died to a bubbling moan . . . then a final death rattle . . . You did not stop swinging the chair until the thing on the floor was a mass of oozing scarlet pulp."

The sexual theme in many comic-book stories and pictures verges on pornography. Fantasy comics give vivid details of the practices of ghouls, werewolves, and vampires. Blood-dripping heads, hacked from bodies, also are a standard pictorial ingredient. Dr. Fredric Wertham, New York psychiatrist and leading crusader against crime comics, has observed that "If a medical student had to write a paper for his psychopathology class on the varieties of sadistic fantasies and sadistic acts, he could cover the whole field by studying just what is in our children's comics."⁸

Advertisements in comic books are frequently cited as detrimental. Some offer pseudo-medical cures which play on an adolescent's desire to improve his personal appearance. Others offer dangerous articles for sale. The Senate subcommittee cited a full-page advertisement illustrating ten weapons for sale, among them an "Oriental battle knife—designed for long-distance throwing . . . made to split a board at 30 feet"; a "Commando-knife, all-metal, needle-pointed, razor-sharp"; a "fireball slingshot—silent sweet shooting"; and a "Finnish hunting knife . . . richly engraved blade with deep blood grooves."

EMPHASIS ON CRIME AND SEX IN TELEVISION AND MOVIES

An estimated 35.8 million television sets were in use on May 1, 1955, and numerous surveys bear out the impression that a large majority of American children are regular TV-viewers. Testimony before the Senate subcommittee last October indicated that children of elementary school

⁸ Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953), p. 180.

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age spend on the average from 22 to 27 hours a week before television sets—as much time as they spend in school classrooms. Studies show also that crime and western dramas, saturated with violence, tend to be concentrated in the so-called “children’s hours.”

In a sample week, Jan. 25-31, 1954, monitoring of seven television channels in New York revealed that 7,065 acts or threats of violence had been shown in that period, and that such fare was three times as prevalent during the periods when children customarily watch television as in other hours.

Movies do not occupy as much of the time of children as comic books and television, but they too often emphasize themes of sex and violence. At a hearing in Los Angeles on June 16, Sen. Kefauver said the subcommittee had received many letters complaining of “excessive brutality, sadism, and illicit sexual behavior in motion pictures.” A film reviewer for 50 Catholic papers complained that “many drive-ins have recently turned to crime, violence, and sex-type pictures.” He made the assertion also that some drive-in theaters “condone and encourage” unseemly behavior among young patrons.

Bad Influences and Youthful Delinquency

LITTLE AGREEMENT can be found among experts on the degree to which the unwholesome materials which occupy the leisure time of so many young people have contributed to the rise in juvenile delinquency, particularly juvenile acts of violence.* Although it is widely accepted that delinquency has its roots in complex psychological and sociological factors, there is much variability in the emphasis given by different specialists to the specific factors involved. A recent study of the problem points out that many persons appreciate the “pluralistic nature of causation in juvenile delinquency,” but that not many are aware that the various causes are “interactive.” The latter

* The juvenile delinquency rate fell immediately after World War II but has risen steadily since 1948. The U.S. Children’s Bureau estimates that more than 1¼ million children were apprehended as delinquents last year, and that one-half million were up for juvenile court action. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has reported that arrests of juveniles under 18 rose 2.3 per cent from 1953 to 1954, when arrests of adults declined 1.9 per cent. Boys and girls under 18 accounted for 10 per cent of all arrests.

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factor makes it useless to attempt to rate the importance of any one cause.¹⁰

The Senate investigators recognized that the delinquency problem "must be viewed in the framework of the total community climate in which children live."

Certainly none of the children who get into trouble live in a social vacuum. One of the most significant changes of the past quarter century has been the wide diffusion of the printed word, particularly in certain periodicals, plus the phenomenal growth of radio and television audiences.

The child today in the process of growing up is constantly exposed to sights and sounds of a kind and quality undreamed of in previous generations. . . . [They] can be a powerful force for good . . . [or] evil. Their very quantity makes them a factor to be reckoned with.¹¹

The emphasis on crime, sex, and violence in the "entertainment" of young people thus influences to some extent their responses to other forces and pressures which play upon the total personality and affect the juvenile's basic attitude toward life.

PORNOGRAPHY AS TOUCH-OFF TO MURDER AND RAPE

No argument, of course, is ever raised as to the unfitness of pornography for diversion of the immature. A number of experts questioned by the Senate subcommittee felt there was a direct connection between the unhealthy erotic stimulation provided by such material and some of the particularly heinous crimes that have been committed by minors in recent years.

A Philadelphia police official, replying to the subcommittee questionnaire, commented: "Pornographic literature has stirred up male youth who consequently go out and commit gang rape. This mass rape is an integral part of the juvenile gang system. Its frequency is underestimated . . . because many of the victims are afraid to report these crimes to the authorities." Sen. Kefauver noted on May 24:

While this traffic [in pornography] has been growing, sex crimes have increased with almost unbelievable rapidity . . . approximately 110 per cent since 1937. . . . More rapes are now being committed by 18 and 19-year-old boys than by males in any other age groups and the percentage of rapists under 20 has approximately doubled

¹⁰ Milton R. Barron, *The Juvenile in Delinquent Society* (1954), p. 83.

¹¹ Senate Judiciary Committee Interim Report, *Comic Books and Juvenile Delinquency* (Mar. 14, 1955), p. 2.

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since 1940. The impulses which spur people to sex crimes unquestionably are intensified by reading and seeing this filthy material.¹²

Father Daniel Egan, a Franciscan priest whose mission is with teen-agers, testified at the New York hearings of the subcommittee in May that he believed exposure to pornography might lead to sex crimes against playmates. The danger from pornography was considered greater than that from marihuana, because salacious material circulates widely and may infect an entire school. William Deerson, dean of a New York high school, testified that he saw "definitely a connection between the juvenile delinquency rate and the reading of this material," which frequently stimulates the juvenile to "some overt act."

Dr. Benjamin Karpman, chief psychotherapist at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D. C., said the most dangerous form of pornography for the adolescent was that dealing with homosexuality and perversion. "You can take a perfectly healthy boy or girl and by exposing them to abnormalities you can virtually crystallize and settle their lives." Although individuals may vary in their reactions to such material, it may have a deleterious effect "down to the age of five or six, if it falls on proper soil."

Dr. George W. Henry, professor of clinical psychiatry at Cornell University College of Medicine, said a child could be "sexually perverted" by studying pornography of this nature, and that it constituted an "important factor in the increase in sex crimes and deviations." He said that no one could predict in advance whether a particular juvenile might be led to violence by exposure to certain types of pornography, but "suicide, murder and psychosis might be the end result of this type of trash."

Instances of apparently motiveless killing by juveniles were attributed to an abnormal desire, fomented by certain types of pornography, to obtain sexual gratification through violence. Dr. Henry explained: "This is related to the fundamental principle that a person who engages in such killings is . . . poorly adjusted, usually as a male. In order to bolster up his ego, he has to do something to give him the feeling that he is a man. If in addition he has been

¹² F.B.I. statistics, gathered from 1,389 cities with a combined population of 38.6 million persons, show that 3,700 juveniles under 18 were arrested in those communities during 1954 for sex crimes; rape was the charge in 584 of the cases. The arrested group included 1,429 children under 15, of whom 105 were charged with rape. Fifteen per cent of all rape arrests in 1954 involved boys under 18; 36 per cent, boys under 21.

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trained to sadistic ways of bolstering his ego, so much the worse."

ALLEGED CORRUPTIVE INFLUENCE OF HORROR COMICS

In the view of Dr. Wertham, many comic books are even more degrading than outright pornography. This is because they deal more fully with sadism, sexual immorality and crime, because they fill the lives of far more children, and because they appear to have the sanction of adults. In *Seduction of the Innocents* (1953) Wertham reported on his studies of many delinquent comic-book devotees whose earliest sexual impulses were deeply intertwined with a taste for brutality.

"The short circuit which connects violence with sex is a primitive pattern slumbering in all people," he wrote. "It can easily be released in children if it is drilled into them early enough and long enough. It is to these primitive layers of the undeveloped mind, to this weak spot, that comic books appeal. . . . Children transpose sadism into their own sphere." Wertham asserted that comic books did "their share in laying the psychological groundwork for childhood prostitution," including homosexual prostitution, which he believed was on the increase.

The callousness of some delinquents, after committing atrocious crimes, is attributed in part to the blunting of their sensibilities by frequent exposure to comic-book horrors. Opponents of crime comics contend also that they undermine a child's respect for authority and make the power and affluence of criminals and sadists attractive. The Superman theme in comic books is said to teach children that the forces of law and order cannot win without supernatural aid. In many comic-book stories, crime is not punished, at least not by the agencies established by society for that purpose. Children are said to learn the techniques of crime while they are being conditioned to criminal attitudes.

Not all who object to crime comics take so extreme a position, particularly in view of the difficulty of isolating specific causes of delinquent acts. The medium even has its defenders; they point out that many children who read crime comics do not get into trouble. It is sometimes argued that children normally have aggressive impulses for which the comics may provide a safe outlet.

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Publishers of crime comics have made full use of such professional opinion to defend their products. One publisher went so far as to attribute the criticism of comic books to Communist inspiration. Some have pointed out that traditional literature for children, even the Bible, has its share of violence and sex. Wertham has observed, however, that no other form of children's literature makes violence and sex the core of its substance, presents them in such immoral context, or describes specific heinous acts so vividly.

CALCULATED RISK IN HEAVY DIET OF CRIME STORIES

On the whole, the trend of opinion is toward the view that, whether or not the emphasis on brutality, horror, and sex in the various forms of mass entertainment can be held accountable for specific juvenile offenses, such themes hardly are suitable for children. The Senate subcommittee concluded that "This country cannot afford the calculated risk involved in feeding its children, through comic books, a concentrated diet of crime, horror and violence."

There was substantial, although not unanimous agreement among the experts that there may be detrimental and delinquency-producing effects upon both the emotionally disturbed child and the emotionally normal delinquent. Children of either type may gain suggestion, support, and sanction from reading crime and horror comics.

There are many who believe that the boys and girls who are the most avid and extensive consumers of such comics are those who are least able to tolerate this type of reading material.

Opinions on the impact of television and movies on juvenile delinquency follow the same pattern. A recent study of the sociological forces underlying juvenile delinquency noted that "The mass media teach children that violence is a solution to problems in human relations." Although reading crime comics might not lead a particular juvenile to commit a crime, it tends to make him "accept violence, when practiced by others, as 'normal.'"¹³ Sen. Kefauver recently noted that crime, as portrayed by TV, radio, movies, and comics, was frequently "overcome only by brute force."¹⁴ Wertham observed:

Much as I have searched for it, I have been unable to find that crime and violence programs [on television] satisfy psychological needs in children. . . . I have found that with regard to simple

¹³ Barron, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

¹⁴ Testimony before Senate Labor and Public Welfare subcommittee, July 6, 1955.

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values necessary for social orientation, television has confused some children, troubled others, and made still others . . . callous and indifferent to human suffering.¹⁵

A majority of professional personnel polled recently by a Hunter College psychologist expressed the view that television shows were not responsible for the increase in delinquency, but that "sensitive" children might be disturbed by programs that stress murder, horror, and terror.¹⁶ A recent text on juvenile delinquency said that "Television viewing presents a new and as yet not fully understood phenomenon in terms of its real and ultimate effects on family life and on the behavior of children and youth."¹⁷

IMPACT OF CURRENT SOCIAL VALUES ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Many observers hold that the primary source of the demoralization of youth is the prevailing moral tenor of society itself, which is reflected in the objectionable content of movies, comic books, and television programs. They believe that it is society that is delinquent; children are only its victims. According to such reasoning, children might safely be exposed to tales of corruption and crime if they were raised in an environment of high moral standards, obedience to law, and stern discipline.

Producers and distributors of mass media tend to embrace this view. A movie trade association official, for instance, recently told the Senate investigators that the blame for delinquency should not be placed on his industry but on civilization. A Hollywood studio executive, during interrogation by the subcommittee in Los Angeles on June 17, retorted: "Drinking, liquor, divorce—we didn't start them. When you wind it all up, you'll find it comes right back to the rearing of the child in the home."

It is frequently contended that prevailing folk values—the American credo of success, esteem for the accumulation of wealth, pressure put on each generation to improve its status over that of its parents, glorification of power and toughness, contempt for slavish obedience to authority—are conducive to delinquency. These values, soaked up by children in their daily associations with adults, are said to have more effect on a young person's attitudes than the trite

¹⁵ Fredric Wertham, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

¹⁶ Robert M. Dolenson, "Television and Our Children—The Experts Speak Up," *Parents Magazine*, December 1954, p. 36.

¹⁷ William C. Kvaraceus, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

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precepts of good behavior that are taught in school, church, youth organizations, and "good" homes.

Judge Elijah Adlow of the Municipal Court of Boston blames the lowered "standards of communal morality" for the fact that youthful mischievousness, which in previous generations rarely went beyond minor pranks, may lead now to serious crime. "An age that has witnessed more drinking, more gambling, and a more widespread indulgence in luxuries and comforts than ever before is bound to witness a gradual disappearance of those primitive virtues which sterner and more sober generations nourished and applauded."¹⁸

Sociologists suggest that if a child is reared in a society in which the goal of achievement is stressed more than the manner of achievement, he is likely to seek out anti-social ways of making good if he sees no prospect of attaining status and affluence by approved methods. Milton L. Barron observed in *The Juvenile in Delinquent Society* (1954) that "Many children in American society center their emotional convictions heavily upon objectives, with far less emotional support for the prescribed processes of reaching out for them." Albert Deutsch asserted in *Our Rejected Children* (1950) that "Our crass materialistic culture places its main emphasis on getting some place but with light regard for the means used to get there."

Sen. Kefauver, summing up the findings of his subcommittee on July 7, commented that "The materialism of our age, with its emphasis on getting ahead and financial success, subjects children to great strain and oftentimes frustration." The senator felt that society "may and does contribute to the development of delinquency" by failing to provide appropriate outlets for "the perfectly normal urge for achievement, for new experiences, for adventure and excitement."

In many delinquents there is a pattern of school failure, particularly reading difficulty, truancy, early school leaving, followed by inability to find gainful employment. Such children, having failed in socially approved areas of achievement, are more than ordinarily susceptible to the influences which push the younger generation to anti-social means of winning personal satisfactions.

A boys' school headmaster recently observed that con-

¹⁸ Elijah Adlow, "Teen-Age Criminals," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1955, p. 46.

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tinued public concern over delinquency had been influential in setting up a grotesque prototype which many otherwise stable adolescents feel compelled to imitate. He warned: "In molding men and women it is . . . better to build toward a good model than from a bad one. . . . There are serious defects in an approach that assumes that the way to make someone better is to show him continuously how bad he can be."¹⁹

Measures to Deal With Debasing Influences

FOLLOWING a recommendation of the Subcommittee to Study Juvenile Delinquency, Congress recently closed a loophole in the section of the federal criminal code which prohibits interstate transportation of pornography. An amendment approved by President Eisenhower on June 28 made the ban applicable, not only to the mails and common carriers, but to all other means of transportation, including the private automobile. The maximum penalty for violations was set at a fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for five years.²⁰

The subcommittee has recommended amendment of state statutes forbidding dissemination of pornography to impose heavier penalties than the usual \$300 to \$500 fine, which is considered to have no deterrent effect in view of the fact that large profits are obtainable from the illicit trade. Several members of the subcommittee have sponsored a bill to increase the penalty for dealing in indecent publications in the District of Columbia from one year's imprisonment and a \$50 to \$500 fine to one year and a \$100 to \$1,000 fine, with a minimum fine of \$500 for second offenders.

The Senate last March authorized another Judiciary subcommittee, headed by Sen. Daniel (D-Tex.), to conduct a nation-wide study of the drug traffic and of federal, state, and local methods of combating it. The subcommittee is to submit recommendations for strengthening narcotics controls at the next session of Congress. Meanwhile, there

¹⁹ Robert L. Lamborn, "Must They Be 'Crazy, Mixed-up Kids?'" *New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 1955, p. 20.

²⁰ A bill introduced by Sen. Kefauver and other senators on July 13 would fix the maximum penalty for a second offense at \$5,000 and ten years' imprisonment.

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is considerable sentiment in favor of imposing heavier penalties on those who sell drugs to minors. A measure sponsored by more than 40 senators would make a prison sentence of 10 to 20 years mandatory in such cases for a first offense, and a sentence of life imprisonment or death for a second offense.²¹

VOLUNTARY CENSORSHIP OF MOVIES AND TELEVISION

Efforts to reduce the unwholesome content of movie and television shows produced primarily for the entertainment of children lie largely in the realm of voluntary censorship. The effectiveness of self-regulation in the field has been seriously questioned. Sen. Kefauver said on June 19 that he thought the hearings of his subcommittee had alerted the movie and television industries to their excesses; he expected them to be more careful about living up to the standards set forth in industry codes.²²

Former Sen. Hendrickson (R-N.J.), who used to be chairman of the subcommittee, suggested at a hearing on Oct. 19, 1954, that policing of television programs by the government or by an industry czar might be necessary to keep them clear of anything tending to foster juvenile delinquency. Director of Federal Prisons James V. Bennett recommended the same day that the President appoint a watchdog committee to keep an eye on TV crime shows. The subcommittee refrained, however, from giving official support to proposals of this nature.

The Federal Communications Commission is expressly prohibited by the Federal Communications Act from exercising censorship over the content of broadcast programs, although it is authorized to grant three-year licenses only to broadcasting stations which are found to serve the public interest, convenience, or necessity. The F.C.C. took the position last October that it would be dangerous and undemocratic for the government to censor television programs, and that any censorship law that might be enacted by Congress would be of doubtful constitutionality. F.C.C. Commissioner Rosel Hyde told the Senate subcommittee

²¹ Existing federal law prescribes fines or imprisonment without distinction as to whom a sale is made. Prison terms are fixed at two to five years for a first offense, five to ten years for a second offense, and ten to 20 years for subsequent offenses.

²² An official of the Motion Picture Association of America, responding recently to complaints about over-emphasis on violence and sex in movie advertising, cautioned studio publicity departments to "exercise restraint and good judgment."

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that it was the responsibility of the public to make known its feelings about objectionable programs.²³

Most stations subscribe to the code of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters. The code defends inclusion of "a certain amount" of "crime, violence and sex" in broadcast programs on the ground that such subjects are "part of the world . . . [children] will be called upon to meet," and that their presentation will be "helpful in orienting the child to his social surroundings." However, the code forbids showing "violence and illicit sex . . . [in] an attractive manner [or] to an extent such as will lead a child to believe that they play a greater part in life than they do."

DIFFICULTIES IN ENFORCEMENT OF COMIC BOOK CODE

Efforts at self-censorship of comic books have met with difficulties. In the face of mounting criticism and a threat of legal censorship, the Association of Comic Magazine Publishers was formed in 1948 and adopted a six-point code which put a ban on "sadistic . . . wanton . . . obscene" themes. Only 12 publishers, representing one-third of the comic-book output, joined the association and several of them later resigned. Publishers of wholesome comics objected to being associated with "inferior" products or those which might be on the borderline of good taste. The code's seal of approval later appeared on some comic books which differed little from those which had caused complaint.

A new organization, Comics Magazine Association of America, was organized on Oct. 26, 1954, following the subcommittee's hearings on comic books. A more comprehensive code was adopted and a code administrator appointed. The new pact banned horror, sadism, lust, depravity, and obscenity. It permitted crime presentations so long as certain standards were met, such as refraining from showing criminals in a sympathetic or glamorous light, presenting explicit details of criminal methods, and so on. Publishers responsible for approximately three-fourths of the production of comic books joined the association.

In its March 1955 report the Kefauver subcommittee

²³ Former F.C.C. Commissioner Frieda Henneck, testified, however, that she thought it "incumbent on the F.C.C. to take positive remedial steps" by denying licenses to broadcasters who "subject the children and youth of this country to the concentrated and unbalanced fare of violence, brutality, crime and horror from which there is little escape under present programming."

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praised this development as a step in the right direction but warned: "If this latest effort at industry self-regulation does not succeed, then other ways and means must—and will—be found to prevent our nation's young from being harmed by crime and horror comic books." New York's Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Publication of Comics concluded on Mar. 21 that the comics industry code had been only 50 per cent successful in bringing about removal of offensive material; it said that many books bearing the code seal "contain an abundance of the same type of material termed objectionable by the [code] authority."

An Associated Press survey disclosed on July 9 that legislation to ban comic books depicting horror, sex, or violent crimes, or to forbid their sale to persons under 18 years of age, had been enacted this year in 13 states.²⁴ The law enacted in New York fixed a maximum penalty of a \$500 fine and one year's imprisonment for anyone convicted of selling to minors obscene comic books, films, or pictures, or material whose principal content concerns criminal methods, illicit sex, horror, terror, physical torture, brutality, or physical violence. The new law, promptly challenged by three Times Square booksellers, was upheld in mid-June in its initial court test.

NEW LEGISLATION TO COMBAT JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Expansion of various public facilities designed to lead the delinquency-prone child into suitable activities, or prevent the youngster already in trouble from developing into a hardened criminal, is being carried out or projected.²⁵ President Eisenhower said in his State of the Union message to Congress last Jan. 6: "We must strengthen . . . [state] resources for preventing and dealing with juvenile delinquency." Congress made funds available last year for a new unit in the U. S. Children's Bureau to give technical assistance to states undertaking to expand facilities to combat delinquency, but administration budget proposals this year for added funds were severely pruned.

²⁴ California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. Such bans were under consideration also in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania, and the legislatures of two additional states—Rhode Island and Vermont—had set up committees to study the question.

²⁵ For minors who have become tough and callous to brutality, there is growing sentiment, particularly among jurists and law enforcement officers, in favor of harsher punitive treatment to counteract the contempt of such offenders for the soft ways of juvenile courts.

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Sen. Wiley (R-Wis.) introduced a bill in February to authorize a five-year program of federal aid, to cost \$3 million the first year, to help the states develop anti-delinquency programs. A similar measure, sponsored by Sens. Kefauver, Hennings (D-Mo.), and Langer (R-N. D.), would establish an Office for Children and Youth in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which would take in the existing Children's Bureau and a new Bureau of Juvenile Delinquency. The bills are now being studied by a Senate Labor and Public Welfare subcommittee headed by Sen. Lehman (D-N. Y.).

A Kefauver subcommittee report of Mar. 10 called for additional legislation in numerous areas to prevent growth of "a bigger and tougher crop" of delinquents in the future. The recommendations included proposals for more funds for public housing and school aid and sufficient payments for dependent children to permit working mothers to stay at home. Several pending bills aim to improve rehabilitation services for younger offenders.²⁶

State and local legislation to combat delinquency provides for such action as organization of specially trained police corps to deal with juveniles, expansion of rehabilitation centers and psychiatric services, and institution of special procedures for older delinquents. In a special message to the New York legislature last Jan. 26, Gov. Harriman urged an all-out attack on "the forces which distort the behavior of our children." The legislative body complied by authorizing a bipartisan commission to arrange for a state-wide conference in the autumn to draft proposals for an attack on delinquency.

Mayor Wagner of New York City promised on May 9 to take prompt action to set up a "priority program" to curb delinquency. The city's Youth Board, operating on a \$2,357,000 budget, is to have an additional \$977,000 to expand its program. A unique project of the board, which is attracting wide attention, is the assignment of special workers to gain the confidence of members of tough teenage gangs and attempt to channel their energies and loyalties into constructive activities.

Representatives of 18 states took initial steps last Janu-

²⁶ Bills introduced in Congress as a result of the delinquency hearings include measures to grant tax relief to foster families sheltering delinquents who would otherwise be sent to institutions; to permit local or state authorities to handle delinquents who may have broken federal laws; to bar unauthorized crossing of international borders by juveniles; and to make it a federal offense to cross a state line to avoid complying with a family support order.

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ary to set up reciprocal arrangements for dealing with delinquents who cross state lines. A joint resolution is pending in Congress to authorize an interstate compact for that purpose, open to adherence by all states. The proposed compact provides for return of runaways and for placing psychotic or mentally defective strays in institutions.

SCHOOL-AND-WORK PROGRAM; STUDY OF HOSTILE YOUTHS

In recognition of the fact that failure in school may encourage delinquency, a number of communities have established special courses and various educational and psychiatric services to help backward pupils attain better records. In certain cities teen-agers who might become truants or quit school before graduating are given half-day, paid employment as a part of the high school curriculum. Such programs are an answer to the contention that child-labor and school-attendance laws play a part in turning mature teen-agers with little scholastic bent to idleness and mischief. The school-and-work program appears to provide immediate satisfactions and the prospect of future vocational stability; it thus makes delinquency less attractive to many youths.

A number of voluntary organizations are working out new programs to counteract deleterious influences on young people. A National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency, representing a number of service, fraternal, and veterans' organizations, was created on Feb. 4 in Washington with the goal of putting new research knowledge to work in local programs. The Advertising Council, a non-profit organization that stages public-service advertising campaigns, announced last November that it would put on a national drive for public support of anti-delinquency programs. The National Probation and Parole Association late last year received \$600,000 from the Ford Foundation to undertake a five-year program to help localities develop preventive and rehabilitation services in the fight against delinquency.

Such developments illustrate the many-pronged approach of the nation's effort to bear down on the forces which lead so many young people to defy society. Success of the effort may depend to a great extent on wider knowledge of the innate nature of children who go wrong.

The U. S. Public Health Service's National Institute of Mental Health at Bethesda, Md., is studying a group of so-

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cially hostile children who have been in trouble with authorities. Fritz Redl, director of the project, has noted that not all defiant behavior necessarily leads to delinquency, and that not all delinquents show overt hostility. "Some of the hardest-to-reach cases exhibit a very 'slick' surface conformity as a safe cover for the cultivation of a totally immoral outlook on life or a safe buildup for a long-prepared criminal 'splurge.' " Of the obviously defiant group, the most baffling are those who "act destructively any time they so desire because they enjoy it." ²⁷ Until science can explain more fully the sources of such attitudes, it is generally agreed that society should do more to protect children from the forces which tend to encourage a destructive outlook on life.

²⁷ Fritz Redl, "Our Troubles With Defiant Youth," *Children*, January-February 1955, p. 5.



